

When the Working Day Is Done by Ember Nickel

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Summary: Nancy's shift is over, and Robin's is well underway. [300 bpm gift for girlsarewolves.]

When the Working Day Is Done

For the song prompt "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun!"

Nancy drives over to the mall alone. Starcourt has only been in existence for a few months, and yet already she sees fragments of Hawkins everywhere in its corridors: the muscular exercise instructor, the old car mounted on a pedestal, the gaudy clock suspended from a balcony.

And the girls waiting in line ahead of her at Scoops Ahoy. She briefly envies them their free summer, without shortsighted bosses or the anxieties of college ahead of them, and tries not to get impatient as they deliberate among the many free sample flavors.

Finally, they step aside, and Nancy is left face-to-face with Robin.

"Hey," says Robin. "Can I get you anything?"

Nancy rolls her eyes. "A meaningful job? A lead on something interesting happening around here? Something to spike my bosses' drinks with?"

"Would you settle for Red, White, and Blueberry Swirl?"

"Hmm. Guess that'll have to do."

She expects a mini scoop, but either there are none left after the middle-schoolers have had their say or Robin is feeling especially generous, because a full cone awaits her. As she tilts it from side to side to avoid the drippy runoff, the Hawkins Post doesn't vanish from her mind, but it fades. A black-and-white relic against the whirl of colors that surround her senses.

By the time she's finished, the line has died down and Robin is able to sneak around next to her, leaning her head on Nancy's shoulder. "Careful," Nancy says, "don't let me drip on your uniform."

"You kidding?" Robin laughs. "These guys are cheapskates, they'll treat it as a badge of honor."

"If you think these guys are bad—" Nancy begins.

"Yeah?"

But she finds herself not willing to answer. There are enough monsters in the world, demented dogs and shadow beasts. With Robin she has something else to dwell on, something real and brilliant, and that's worth being quiet for a change.

"I cannot believe," calls a voice from behind them, "you got a girlfriend before I did, Buckley."

"Careful," Robin says without looking up, "or I'll need to reset that whiteboard."

"What whiteboard?" Nancy asks.

"Harrington's failure tally and part-time Russian translation system."

"Okay." Nancy stands up. "This I've got to see."

You can take the girl out of the newsroom, it turns out, but you can't take a nose for news out of her.